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PATTERNS 1980

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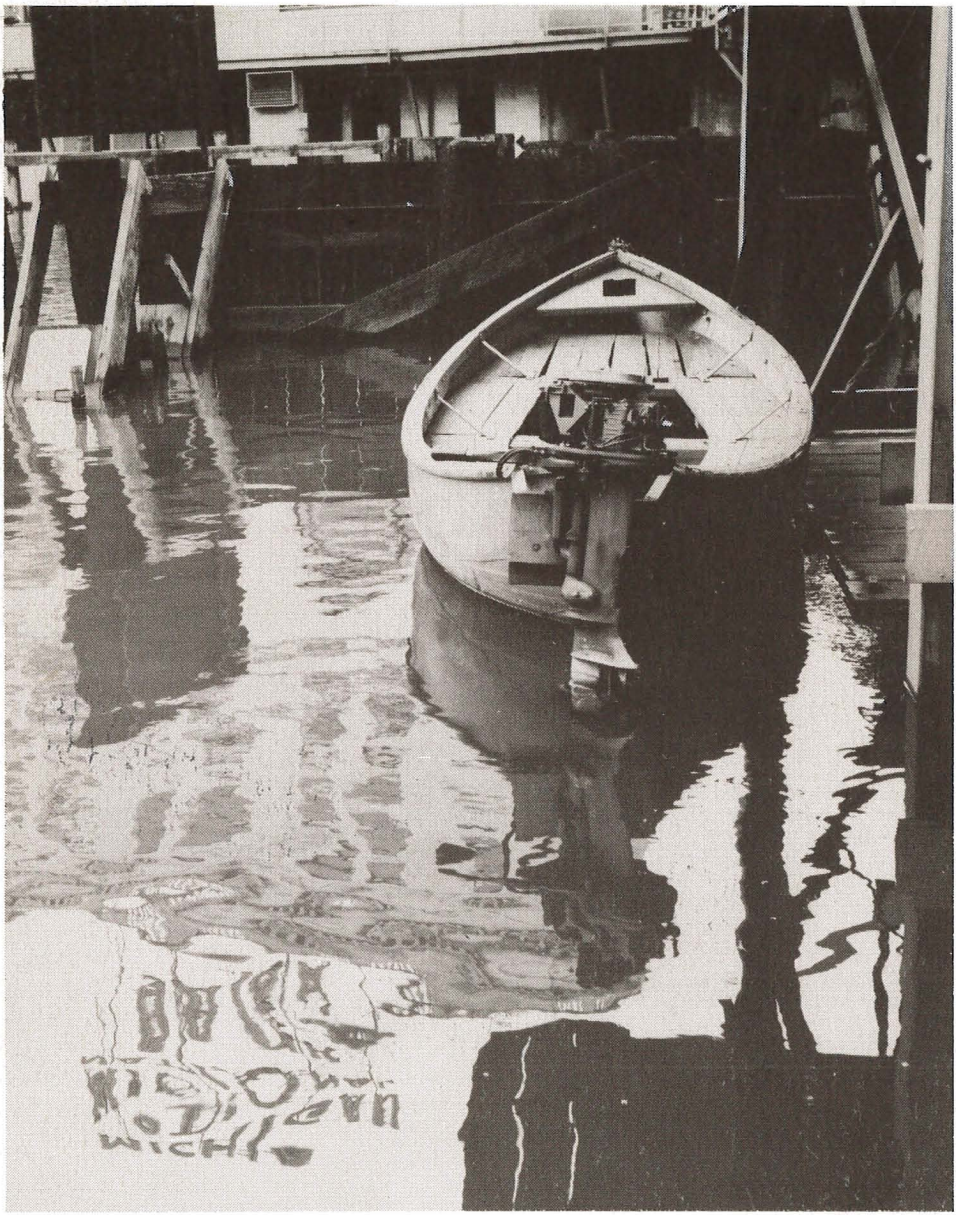

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PATTERNS 1980

A Publication of
St. Clair County Community College
Port Huron, Michigan

Preface

Tradition and innovation are the energizing concepts of a strong educational institution; they have also been the hallmark of PATTERNS since its first publication twenty-two years ago. Changes are reflected by the perceptive responses to the act of living, growing, and learning in the writing and art of the students at SC^4. Continuity is found in the receptive encouragement of the readers who share these experiences and find in them some truth and beauty for being and becoming the persons we hope will contribute to a more meaningful tomorrow. The visions of today's students will help form the values for tomorrow's world.

COMMITTEE

Writing

Sylvia Bargiel Dick Colwell Susanna Defever
Don Haines Kathleen Nickerson

Art

Patrick Bourke Ray Pierotti John Henry
Dale Northup Earl Robinette

Ballerina

Peter Berg

DEDICATION

"Wit is the only wall between us and the dark." This quotation from Mark Van Doren might well have been said about Clarence E. Scott. His quick mind shed light on any subject he taught. From the moment that Mr. Scott came to St. Clair County Community College fifteen years ago, students and faculty were richer for his true appreciation of language and learning.

He taught composition, American Literature, and Shakespeare; to each of these subjects he brought his extraordinary memory and his keen intellect. If there is, indeed, a difference between wit and humor, then it can be said that Mr. Scott has a surplus of both. Whether he was attacking the dangling participle, seeking the misplaced apostrophe, exploring a profound passage from Shakespeare, or expanding the vocabulary limits of his students, he put the whole force of his unusual ability to it.

It is doubtful if he ever forgot a line of poetry once learned, and it is equally sure that he will never be forgotten at this college, which he so enriched with his wisdom, his wit, and his charm. Although Mr. Scott tried to retire "without fuss," the vacancy left by him is too big to remain unnoticed. Missing him will be a lasting thing; remembering his legacy to us — a deep and abiding love of the English language — will be an enduring one. To him, we fondly dedicate this issue of PATTERNS — 1980.

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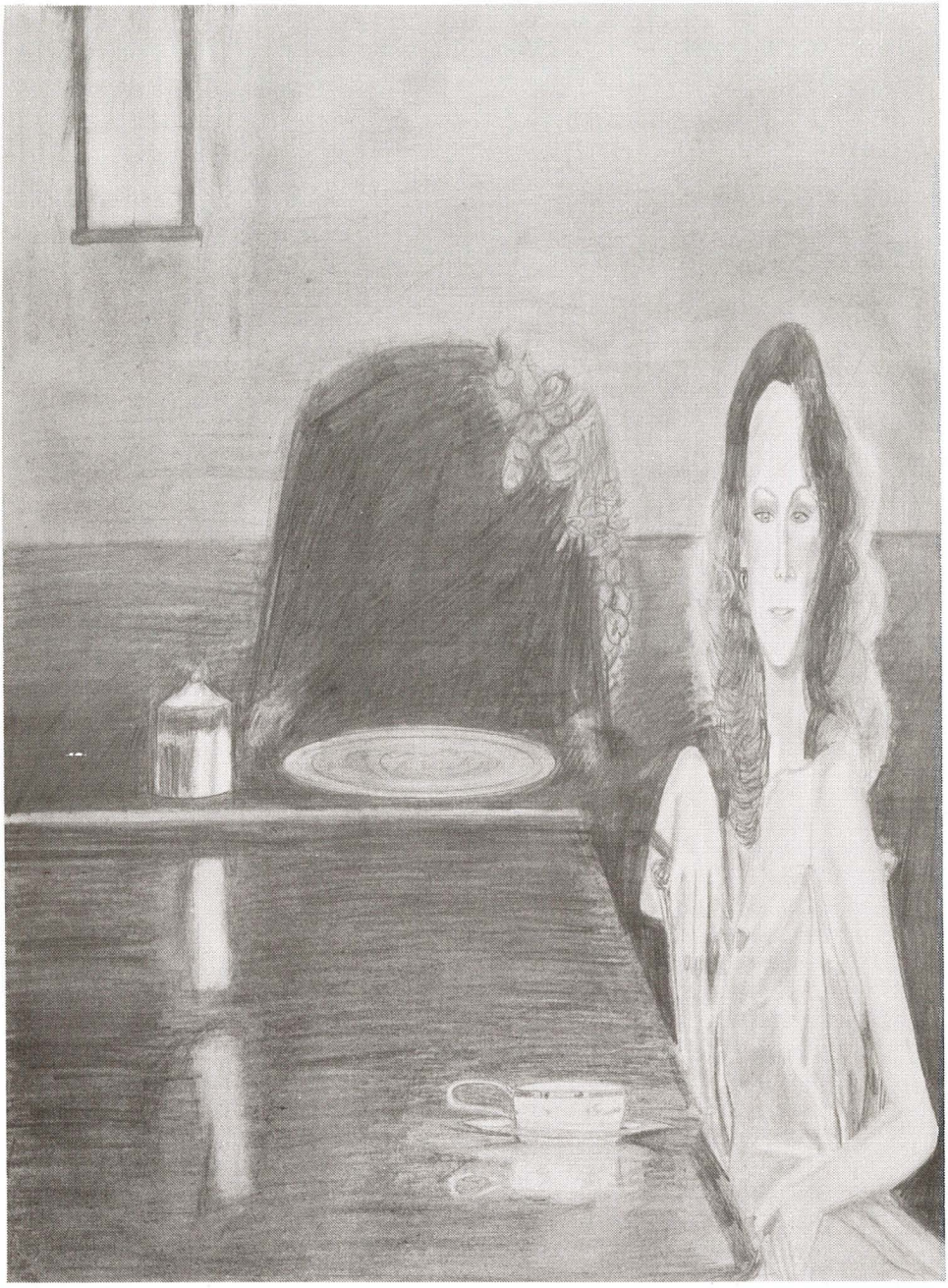


Girl at Table

Rebecca Smith

Broken Plates

By

Michael Kaczorowski

Ellen was already up by the time the garbage cans began banging outside. The men emptying them, Ellen thought to herself, never cared who they disturbed. They just wanted to get the job, and every Friday they disturbed her.

Ellen was in the kitchen early, but this was Friday and she had to get things accomplished before her daughter arrived. Their weekly visits turned into therapy sessions lately, airing all the injustices that Joyce was feeling; it was something Ellen didn't need, but she did it anyway. It was a mother's job.

The phone rang in the sitting room of Ellen's small apartment just as she was readying a breakfast for herself of instant coffee and a sweet roll. She thought of it as a continental breakfast. Ellen let it ring a couple of times before she went for it. Maybe the person calling had the wrong number and would figure it out before she had to pick up the receiver. She finally gave in.

"Hello," Ellen said so pleasantly that simply hearing her voice would brighten up anyone's day.

"Mother, what's wrong?" Joyce said excitedly, "you scare me when you don't answer the phone immediately. I always think something's happened to you."

"Aren't you coming over today?" Ellen replied, quickly changing the subject.

"I'll be a little late, Mother, but I have a lot to talk about. Things just aren't going right," Ellen heard Joyce sobbing into the receiver.

"Joyce dear, do you want me to fix a big meal?"

"No Mother! Didn't you hear me?"

All Ellen heard now was crying, so she said, "bye," and hung up the phone.

The crying from the receiver was ringing loudly in her ear; there were still some parts of Ellen's body that were sensitive, and her ears were most of all.

Ellen never went for loud music in her day and even as she returned to the kitchen and plugged in the radio, soft music was the only kind that she could tolerate while she finished breakfast. Ellen was relaxed once again.

At 11:00 after Ellen glanced over her morning paper, she went to the kitchen closet, which contained all the things she used for cleaning, and took down from a hook, her favorite feather duster. No matter how old-fashioned it seemed, Ellen still believed the old duster did a better job at cleaning than anything else she used. It was her mother's duster, an antique by all standards. Ellen had planned to give it to Joyce as her mother gave it to her. Passing down things was a family tradition. Over the years, Ellen had grown just too fond of it and probably Joyce wouldn't have appreciated the duster as she did; so the tradition stopped.

Entering her sitting room, Ellen's eyes brightened, and her face lost what little sign of fatigue and age that comes about after years of life. She gazed in admiration at her wall and her collection of plates; they were the most precious things she owned. From the top, where layered paint was separating from the wall, all the way to the bottom at the floor, seven rows of maple shelving contained her plate collection. Ellen knew them well.

The plates dated back to the year 1921 when she received her first plate on her fourth birthday; there were plates with dates all the way up to the present. Ellen had acquired a large collection. Ellen's mother started her collecting plates and, over the years, she had built up a collection of plates from all over the world; there were special edition plates that Ellen sent away for. She got a plate on every special occasion. Ellen believed that she had the most beautiful collection of plates in the world; to her anyway it was, and that's all that counted.

Ellen pulled the chair up and began, as she did every Friday, dusting her collection. Ellen reacquainted herself with each one as she brushed off the particles of dust that accumulated from the past seven days. Ellen knew each plate personally, whether it came from the World's Fair, was a Christmas present or a treasure from the Orient. Ellen's collection was a masterpiece to her.

Ellen had just begun the fourth shelf at 3:00. She picked up a black china plate, hand painted with red roses; pearl white daisies adorned the outer edge. She thought it was a birthday plate, but Ellen couldn't remember who had given it or from which birthday it was. She handled each plate as if it were a newborn child. She brushed the feathers across the surface and brought back to life the glimmer and shine that she remembered from a week ago.

"Bang, bang, bang," came a sound from the door startling Ellen, causing her to drop the plate.

"Bang, bang, bang," again the sound from the door.

On the floor, broken into unsalvagable pieces, lay the black china plate.

"Bang, bang, bang," came off the door still another time.

Finally the crying in Joyce's voice could be heard, "Mother, are you all right in there? Open the door!"

Dazed, Ellen walked to the door and opened it.

"Mother, what's the matter with you?" Joyce's voice turned from sadness to anger, "you scared me to death. I thought you might be laid out on the floor or something."

Ignoring the shattered plate, Ellen walked back to the kitchen followed by Joyce and they sat down.

"I picked up your mail," Joyce said, setting on the table a few letters and a package from the London China Exchange, Inc.

"Mother, I'm having problems," Joyce began after a long pause, then started crying again.

"Did you get the things I needed from the store, Joyce?" Ellen replied, acknowledging nothing of the situation.

"Mother, you don't understand! Everything is closing in around me and I don't know where to turn."

"I broke a dish when you knocked today."

"I don't give a damn about your lousy dish!" Joyce jumped up and answered back; the anger had returned to her voice, "I bought this today." Joyce pulled from her purse a .38 revolver and laid it on the table.

"I'm still coming over for dinner Sunday, aren't I, Joyce?" Ellen asked puzzled, "I was planning something special to . . ."

"I thought about using it," Joyce interrupted. Then she began crying, "Mother, don't you care? Am I important to you?"

Ellen answered in a far-away voice, "I imagine if I get some glue, I can fix the plate."

Ellen's face was drawn. For the first time since she had dropped the black plate, she began feeling the pain of something precious that was now lost. Nothing Joyce was feeling now could match the emptiness on Ellen's shelf.

Tears rolled down Joyce's face and she was still slumped over. The revolver lay next to her.

Ellen cried now, which was something she promised that she would never do. She went to the shattered plate lying on the floor. One at a time, Ellen picked up each piece, dusted it off with her duster and placed it in a clear plastic bag. After all the pieces were in the bag, Ellen placed the bag on the shelf where the plate had previously resided.

The apartment grew silent now. Ellen's face was red, finally showing her age and sadness. Everything Ellen felt now was empty as she walked back into the kitchen and hung the feather duster back in the closet.

Joyce's head lay on the table, and her crying stopped. Ellen placed her hand on Joyce's head and began stroking her hair. Ellen stopped momentarily, reached over and picked up the cold gun; her hand was no different as she squeezed the trigger.

Ellen went to the cupboard and began searching for glue.

Brotherhood Judy Huyser

Breaking The Language Barrier

By

Toni Fraelich

As a first-year German student in the United States, I studied diligently hoping to master at least the basics of the German language. I needed to understand as much as possible since I would be an exchange student living with a German family. Upon completion of the course, my vocabulary had greatly expanded, yet at the same time it remained extremely limited. By using my knowledge of German grammar and selected words from topical vocabularies, I could carry on short conversations about family, school, friends and weather. This worked well in conversing with strangers because it enabled us to get acquainted. After that, however, what did I have to say that I could phrase in German? How many times could I say to the same person, "I have one brother and no sisters," or "It's a nice day"? Could I recite my ABC's, and then count from one to a hundred? Because my vocabulary was limited in this manner, I could not express in German words deep feelings or strong opinions on a particular subject, nor could I explain much regarding the United States — its government, its peoples, its problems. After realizing the pronounced language barrier, I attempted to conquer it. Through the use of "broken German," translating friends, and facial expressions or hand and body gestures, I learned to communicate.

Despite the fact that I had studied German for only one year, I struggled to speak it during my stay in Germany. My attempts were sincerely appreciated by everyone I met since they showed my desire to learn their language. But desire alone could not, and did not, always make my carefully constructed sentences understood. After discovering that fact, I resorted to simple words and phrases, which I appropriately termed "broken German." Unconventional as it was, that method worked — especially in restaurants and stores. Knowing the basic food categories listed on menus, I could choose an item with the assurance that I would receive a soup, meat, a dessert, or something to drink. The problem was in not knowing what kind of soup, meat, dessert, or drink! And although I knew how to ask, "What is this?" that particular question quite frequently elicited a response I did not understand. To successfully shop in various stores, the basic requirements were simply knowing the German numbers and how to ask, "How much?" Even first-year German students learn those; however, situations did arise where "broken German" could not rescue me. Then, I had only to repeat in German the excuse, "I am from America," and all was readily forgiven.

Many situations could be handled with "broken German," but when it could not be applied, I relied heavily on translating friends. Having studied English for seven or eight years, they were quite proficient in translating between the two. This method was by far the easiest for me; I had only to speak in my native English. In addition, it was an excellent method because it allowed for deeper, more meaningful conversation. Using my German friends as translators, I could answer their parents' questions about my impressions of Germany, my feelings toward East Berlin and the Berlin Wall, and conditions in the United States.

But when neither English nor German words could convey my true feelings, it was the facial expressions and hand and body gestures that accurately did so. The countless times when my emotions took control proved that actions do speak louder than words. Tears of joy upon arrival, tears of sadness upon departure, laughter at my mispronunciation of mile-long German words, the fixed smile on my face synonymous with not understanding, and a good-night kiss of daughterly affection for my host father — who could express these in **any** language of words?

Although a common spoken language is the usual means of communication, it is possible to communicate with little or no knowledge of that language. Through my experiences as an exchange student, I had the opportunity to learn and utilize other methods because I soon realized, and later accepted, the fact that one year of high-school German had not enabled me to master the language. I did, however, break the language barrier.

———————

How Baby Learned

By

Jeanne Marie Bowman

The tiny child toddled to
the window
and found it foggy,
from the morning mist.

The baby's blue eyes enlarged . . .
ignited in infantile interest.

Wee fingers felt at
Moist, glistening glass.

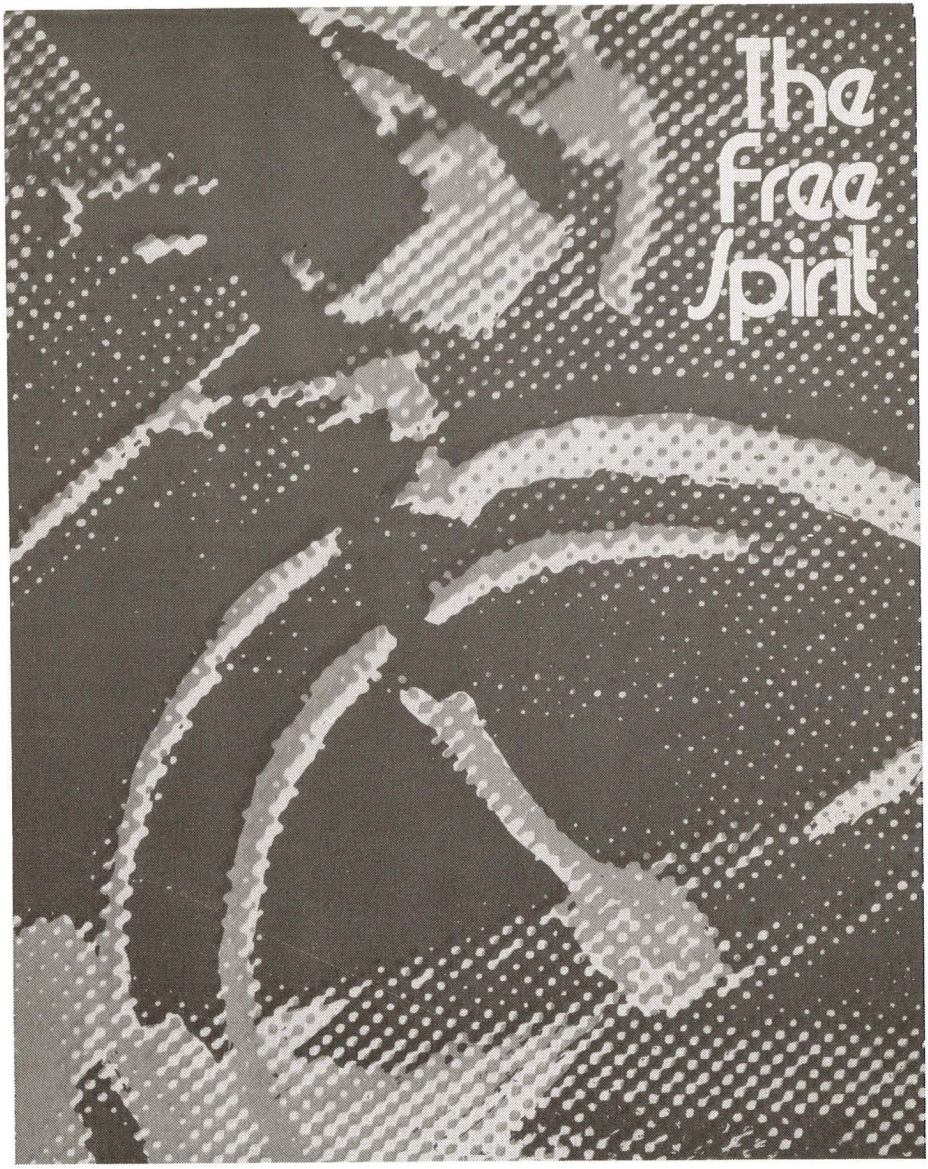
Those helpful hands cleared the haze —
the velvety vapor vanished
as the little one labored.

The sound of a slap
rang through the room as
mortified mother found
fingerprints: profusely put
on her proud panes.

"Bad Baby!" she shrieked,
deeply dismayed at the
dismal smears — not noticing
the sad baby's tears.

Mother and Child

Larry Dodge



Free Spirit 14 Peter Berg

Thoughts At 8 A.M.

By

Michelle Jones

Trying to be immortal
  at eight in the blessed a.m.
Is utterly ridiculous.

People — all of them — should be home
  between satin sheets
  sipping endless cupsful of coffee
  stretching luxuriously
    looking out from their tropic-warm room
      to a square pane of cold blue sky
and chuckling,
  and saying,
    "It sure looks cold out there."

Instead of writing atrocious poetry
  Hunched over in a too-hard chair
    I never believed it was a genius who said
    "The early bird gets the worm."

Who'd want a worm? Not this bird.

———————

Surrogate

By

Charles F. Lautner, Jr.

I see her lumber up the trough
  slowly in her impregnated state
I hear her cry and feel her cough
  laden with extra weight.

Her womb full of nature's wares
  bound for some far place,
She'll deliver what she bears
  no remorse or no disgrace.

She pushes by, her head held high
  no shame upon her name
I wonder, in whose berth she'll lie
  while contractions wrack her frame.

She'll give birth in tender groans
  and rise up in her bed.
She'll push and shove with soft, soft moans
  for this she need not wed.

She leaves her berth feeling light
  she carried to full term.
She'll travel through the starry night
  her womb in search of sperm.

Working

By

Jan Kernohan

Beat the clock
don't be late
they will soon
evaluate
things that you
regard as petty
they just want you
to be ready
at your station
when they open
no excuses
just keep coping
be on time
every day
hurry up
don't delay
beat the clock
don't be late
they will soon
evaluate

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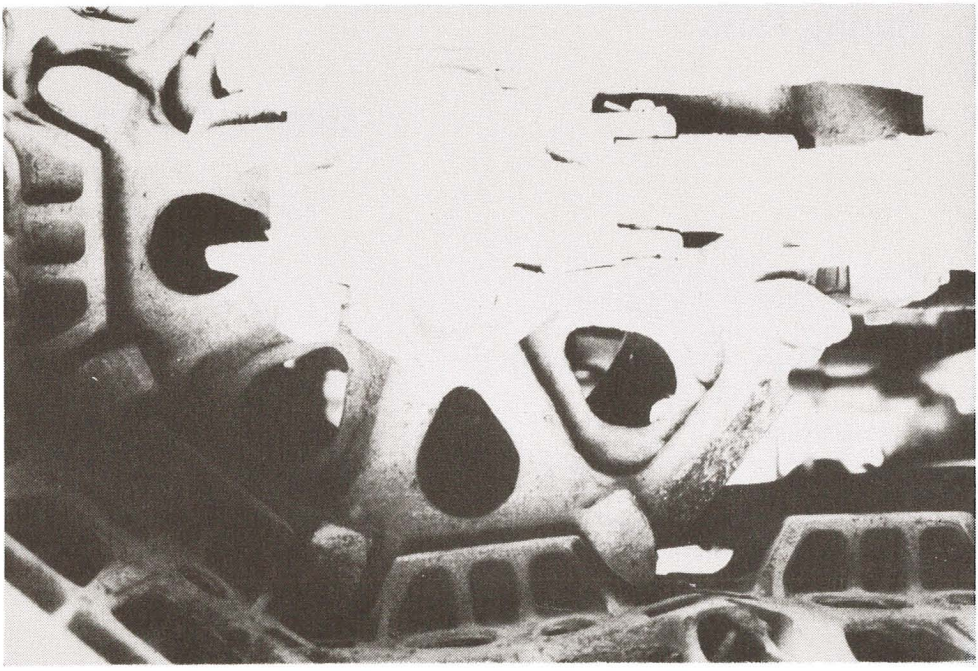


Dinosaur Toes and **Close-Up Tread** Debbie Bassett

Spring Farm Daniel Rhein

Dogs at Twilight

By

Jeanne Marie Bowman

It is slightly after six p.m.
The bright winter sun is dying —
Its frigid gold-rays . . .
Being replaced by icy moonbeams.
This is the twilight exchange.

Little black dogs
Stand importantly in the street.
Their sensitive, wet noses
Point to the still shadows, of
The deepening, lavender sky.
Tuned . . . to such changes . . .
Changes that most of us
(For some reason, or
another) never have
Time . . . to
Notice.

Born

By

Tammy Chope

Slap.

It's a Wednesday

Didn't think time

would crawl up

so slowly

and dismount

so fast.

Now, did you?

Teddy

By

Corinne Kitts Martinez

When Tory was nearly a year old, I bought him a teddy bear. It seemed a rather ordinary teddy bear, but I was attracted to it because it was very soft and spongy. Tory had lots of toys, but at the time, he needed a friend. His older brother, not quite four, was becoming increasingly independent, running off with friends, and didn't always have time for Tory. A teddy bear seemed like the logical choice. Together, they could tumble around, cuddle up for naps, and make believe.

We called the bear Teddy right from the start. Not that someone in the family couldn't have picked a more original moniker, but it was a simple enough name for the family to remember and easy for Tory to manage when he would begin to talk. Little did I know that, at four, Tory would be wrestling with a speech problem and would still be calling the bear Teh-yee.

Nevertheless, Teddy did fit the bill. Tory lugged him all over the house and yard. They shared the high chair and the potty chair. They watched television and read books together. When Tory shunned his bath, Teddy joined in and made it a grand event. Teddy did, in fact, become a great friend, but oh, how he was rewarded!

His poor nose served as a teething ring. At one point he lost the black plastic tip to the cause, and the resulting hole had to be drawn closed to retain the stuffing. I don't remember how, but he also lost his beady little eyes. These I replaced with large, leather-covered buttons. His fur is matted and discolored from too much handling and too few baths and brushings.

These days are easier on Teddy. He sits a lot. At the foot of Tory's bed he sits; and I wonder if he has quite served his purpose; if his sitting there more indicates Tory's needing his old friend less. Then there are the days . . . or nights . . . when Teddy makes it *into* the bed.

On Updike's "Lifeguard"

By

Vicki Cutler

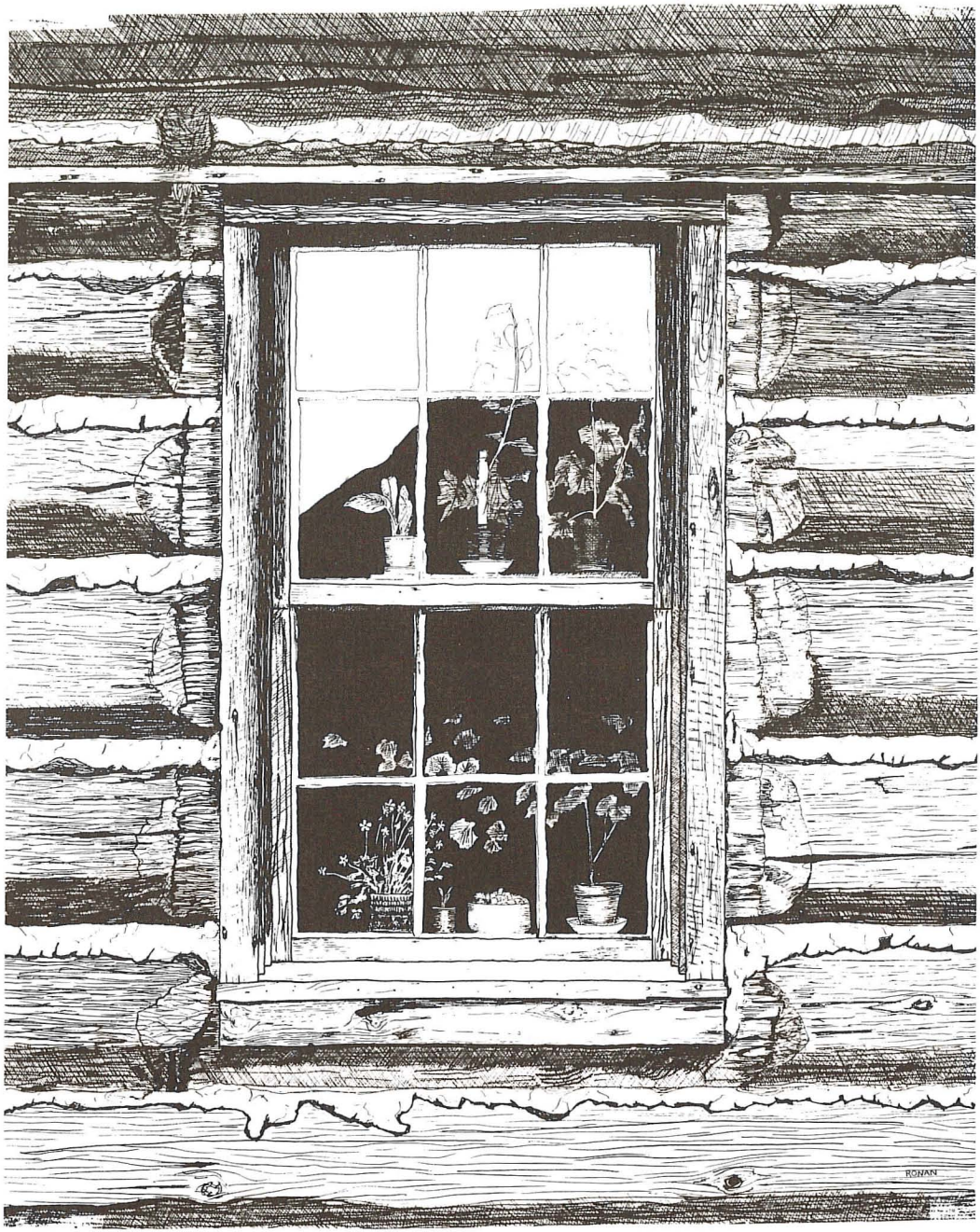
John Updike's short story, "Lifeguard," is brimming with symbolism and imagery. Every paragraph is detailed with description creating vivid pictures and associations. Through the writing techique of comparison, the author shows a unique relationship between the character's study of divinity in the autumn, winter, and spring, and his summer occupation as a lifeguard. Since John Updike does not make use of a developing, eventful plot as the foundation of this story, he relies wholly on his generous use of symbolism and imagery to capture and hold the reader's attention. It is fundamental; for without it, there would be left only dry, drab phrases.

The word "lifeguard" is used as the most significant symbol in the story. It portrays and summarizes the case of what the author is trying to convey about the character he has created. Thus, this one symbol alone can be efficiently and effectively utilized as the title. John Updike employs the occupation of a lifeguard to capture the essence of his character by relating it to the aspirations of a divinity student. Both exist and strive toward the same goal, which is that of saving lives.

As the story unfolds, the character reveals his own interpretation of the relationship between his two roles. He transforms his lifeguard's chair, with the red first aid cross painted on the back, into that of "an immense, rigid, loosely fitting vestment." The sea that he faces and watches becomes "a musty old gentleman" and he finds that it holds deep religious meaning for him. In the ending paragraph, the character states that he is waiting and listening for the human cry for help. He is well-prepared, capable, and eager to save, not only the physically drowning person, but also the person drowning spiritually in the sea of life.

The reader gains knowledge of the character's personality as it expands and becomes more explicit through the use of extensive symbolism and imagery. He proudly displays his tanned body with a definite confidence in his appearance. He is an ectomorph who believes in his superiority over both the endomorph and the muscular mesomorph. Women who choose either of these two types are foolish and sadly mistaken, for the ectomorph is most assuredly the more competent lover. For the character in the story, sexual intercourse, as are other aspects of his life, is a mission of rescue. He reduces people to less than what he is and negatively envisions them as animals, insects, and ultimately sees them in the ocean as "great bobbing backwash of rubbish." He himself sits in his lifeguard's chair high above the unworthy crowd, an eminently supreme man — a savior!

In "Lifeguard," Updike creates a character, which, in turn, creates a story. It is written without a substantial plot, but nonetheless it captivates the reader through the extensive use of symbolism and imagery. Thus, the function of the two is extremely important. They not only help to reveal the relationship between the character's two roles and produce vivid, detailed pictures in the mind's eye, but they act as the core and the basic foundation of the short story itself.



The Window Pat Ronan

Space To Grow

By

Charlene Richter

To gather insight into the humanness of us all, one just needs to read. I used to think that nonfiction was the only literature that talked about the real people, their lives, and problems. In analyzing fiction I have come to the realization that authors are not only talking about real personalities, but also the real problems of humanity. Many authors use fiction in poems, short stories, plays, and novels to put real personalities into literary characters. I used to read a story for the entertainment value only and never look beyond the surface of a story. Now in analyzing writings I have found many images and symbols which add meaning. This gives literature a three-dimensional fullness of life not possible in skimming the surface. Literature then comes to life, and knowing something about the author can give a little insight into where in his or her life the characters may come from.

James Baldwin, who lived in Harlem as a boy, writes about boys growing up in Harlem in his story, "Sonny's Blues." Katherine Mansfield herself may have sat on a park bench, in France, and watched other people's lives as Miss Brill does in her short story. Tennessee Williams, reared in the South, creates Amanda, a lady with Southern aristocratic background. He, too, had a sister as delicate as Laura, and he himself labored in a factory when his heart wished to be creative as did Tom's. All of these characters are in his play, **The Glass Menagerie.**

Reflecting the life style of the lower classes in America is done very effectively by Williams in his play. He portrays the Wingfield's apartment as, "one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers." One gets the feeling of human beings encased in this desperate environment, as if all the families within all the tenements of all the cities of the world are not only trapped in a life style, but also are all the same with no special identity. In real life that may be true: people get up in the morning, the man goes to work with a lunch box in hand; after work, stop for a few beers, then home to the family, a superficial conversation, then dinner, television, and bed. Today some take drugs during the work day to make the monotonous work tolerable. How true that many lower class people lead lives as similar as bees in a hive. Tennessee Williams paints a vivid picture of life in a ghetto, with the "fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation." An environment such as this can enslave the individual and diminish his creative abilities, as well as destroy his identity until he becomes almost a machine with the loss of humanness.

The loss of one's identity or, even worse, going through life never knowing who you are, appears to be a universal problem for those people in lower classes. In Baldwin's short story, "Sonny's Blues," he shows two brothers who have grown up in Harlem. The older brother, with an exact calculating mind, knew who he was and what he wanted to do. He was able to make it out of the grasping environment of his childhood. He got an education and went back to

help other boys growing up in Harlem. Yet, even as he was teaching, he wondered if "popping off needles" did more for these kids than the algebra he taught them. Drugs seem to be a way out for any one who can not deal with his life or environment. Stories such as this point out some of the real problems in our life today. They exist in the Harlems of the world extensively, but not exclusively. People from all classes have turned to drugs as a way out, as their escape from reality.

One reason people need to escape is the lack of true communication between people. Baldwin shows how two brothers, who lived in the same house and had the same parents, talked to each other, but never really communicated until long after they were both adults. Then the older brother was able to understand Sonny as an individual different from himself, yet still valid with his own needs and goals. Maybe communicating needs and having another human caring enough is one step out of the ghetto and drugs.

People now are realizing more and more what they want to do and working towards that goal. Once they used to work all their lives at a job they did not like for the needed money and out of responsibility to family. Dialog in "Sonny's Blues" shows this change:

> "Well Sonny," I said, gently, "you know people can't always do exactly what they **want** to do . . ." **"No,** I don't know that," said Sonny, surprising me. "I think people **ought** to do what they want to do, what else are they alive for?"

Also, in **The Glass Menagerie,** Tom wanted to write, but worked in a warehouse so as to pay the bills. His escape was alcohol and the movies. For him, even after he left the tenement, he was always haunted by his sister Laura and his mother he had left behind. There may be no complete severing of an individual from his childhood environment. This emphasizes the importance of bringing children up in a good environment, physical, mental, and emotional. For many families of lower class incomes, this may not be possible.

Living in a "cupboard" is how Katherine Mansfield puts it in "Miss Brill." She portrays this older single English teacher living in a tiny apartment and escaping to the park on Sundays. There she could imagine she was an actress, a part of the lives that she watched there.

> "No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all."

It is not until she overhears a conversation of two young lovers that she is (forcefully) brought to a grim reality of her own existence. Before, she had thought that only those other old people lived in cupboard apartments, but now she looks around her own apartment and finds it to be a cupboard, not so different from the "hive-like . . . living units" that Williams writes about.

Through literature I can view other people, other classes; I can see how they live, exist, and work. Even more, I can see the complex problems that are brought about largely by their environment over which they have no control. For people to be able to solve any problems, they must be in control of their own lives and in touch with their own feelings and goals. Life in a ghetto does not leave space for this type of realization, as many authors have stated in their writings. How ironic that fiction, a story that is not real, can give such insight into the real life!

Victorian House

Donald Johnson

A Man Lives Twice

By

Corinne Kitts Martinez

Just before dawn he is awakened, more gently than usual, but not really gently. A bowl of water has been placed at the foot of the cot. He is allowed a few moments to splash the sleep from his brain and to urinate before being led through the corridors. Little is said, save for a few rough grunted commands directing him to the courtyard.

In the courtyard, yesterday's choking dust is saturated with dew; but it will be only moments before the sun slices this putrid substance from which he is to take his last breaths. At the edge of panic, his one concern is to breathe as much of this matter as he possibly can before it's too late. As hard as he tries, it becomes increasingly difficult to absorb anything from the tainted atmosphere.

On the far side of the courtyard, against a wall near the doors that shield the outside from this hellish place, he is turned around, bound at the wrists and blindfolded. With the blindfold comes the realization of what he had almost accepted; that on this day, he would die. Someone commands the executioners to raise their weapons. Upon hearing this, he abruptly drops his shoulders which have been knotted with tension in anticipation of the end. He is relieved and is finally able to draw a deep, calm, and soothing breath.

Without warning, there is a tremendous blast. Ropes are cut, the blindfold is removed, someone yells *RUN.*

Outside the compound, away from the acrid smell of exploding gunpowder, there is a sweet, compelling fragrance that affirms the impending freedom of the hills. To get there takes little time, and the journey is gratifying.

The dusty earth is replaced by lush moss. Luxuriant tree ferns rival the palms for their place in the misty sunlight. Squawking, brilliant parrots dart through the dense foliage among orchids blooming in abundance; while more bashful birdlife only murmur their presence in the distance. El coqui, the tree frog, eloquently chirps his sweet name.

An easterly trade wind subsides in prelude to the first soft taps of a light rain. The sweet drops bring cool relief to two closed eyelids.

In the compound, the limp form of a man in damp clothing is dragged to a remote corner. There a wooden box awaits, perched on the edge of a very deep and dusty hole.

The Innocence Of Night

By

David Briscoe

Downtown cruising
with a hate for losing
headlights sparkle
waxed hoods gleam
welcome to main street
the all-American dream

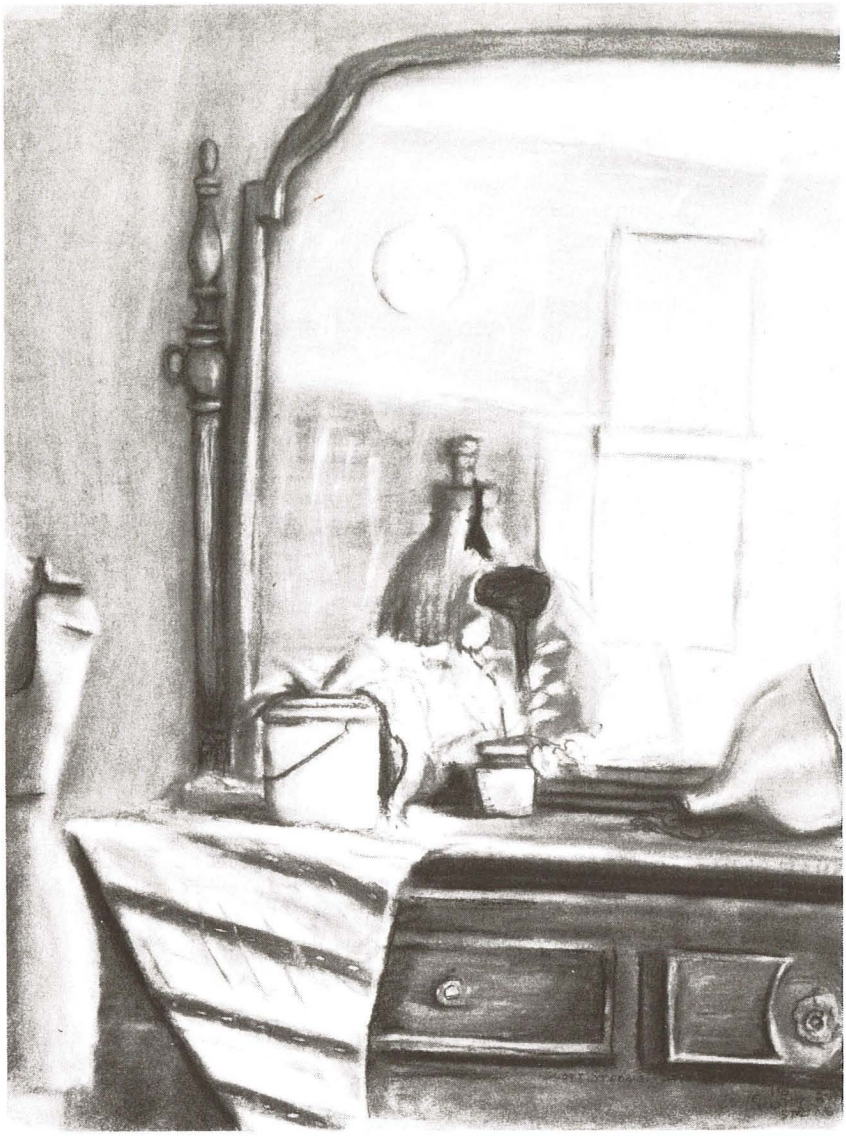
350 Chevy
Zeppelin's heavy
echoes on and on
16 sweet
no shoes on her feet
her daddy's just a pawn

A brilliant seduction
of someone's tax deduction
and there's still time for a beer
make it seem like you're going to scream
and maybe no one will hear

The innocence of night
soon lost
in a sailor's haste
to win the race
no matter what the cost
Winning the battle
but losing the war —
learning to lie
  about love.

A liar's curse
till you ride in a hearse
that you ever saw tonight
living in a dream world
a not what it seems world
a short candle, burning bright.

Strictly American Peter Berg



Bureau

Scott Strong

Dinnertime Reading, It's Not

By

Corinne Kitts Martinez

If I were an artist, a painter, if I worked with charcoal or pastels or India ink, I would have to study shapes, textures, contrast and color. While my colleagues are sketching bowls of fruit and baskets of flowers, I would be sketching something that is my real essence, something that is so much a part of me that if I

were to lose it, I would be lost to a blind man's world; to a world not only of the sightless, but of the tasteless, of the smell-less, and of the void of feeling; in fact, cast off to a stratum below all intelligent life as we know it; to the world of a vegetable, but less than the garden variety, for the garden vegetable drinks in the rays of the sun, is content in its warmth, shivers and dies when the warmth is removed, and laps up the riches of the earth and is satiated; to the world of the amoeba, but the amoeba is not so insipid that it does not seek out nourishment, consume it, and reproduce itself when gratified. No, my existence would be below the lowest, simplest life forms. My world would be a desolute wasteland if my essence were ripped from me, the essence of my very soul, the essence — of spoiled, rotten food, the long forgotten treasures tucked away in the little plastic containers in the far reaches of the refrigerator. These little dabs of leftovers become beautiful art studies when left for several weeks to incubate, ferment, ripen, sour, mature and mold.

Mold is characteristic of almost every treasure and might be described as the mother lode, each vein possessing its own individual character.

Imagine, for instance, the hashed browns. Sealed for who-knows-how-long in their Cool Whip tub, the potatoes are embellished with an aura of jewels. Clear white and brilliant pink, they sparkle in the light making one forget that the hashed browns were originally put there, in the refrigerator, for another purpose. Perhaps they were to be reheated with butter and served with eggs on the morn after they were first fried.

Aroma is another great distinction of the precious gifts so long stowed away. Many and varied are the smells; but after all the delicacies are revealed, their aromas fill the kitchen, commingling into one great explosion that assaults the olfactory system.

Consider the pork roast. Though it was intended to be cubed and added to chop suey, for two or three weeks it has sulked away in a one-quart-size covered mixing bowl. Upon opening, my body recoils in horror at the stench, and I am ashamed for having abandoned such a magnificent pork roast.

With the uncovering of each remaining container, another sense is gratified. The very act of opening the chip dip vessel emits a backwards *whoosh,* reminiscent of the breath sucked in when ice is dropped into one's shirt. Though now inedible, one can recall the feel of the fried lake trout in the mouth — the flaky meat and crispy coating; however, the coating has now gone soft and mushy, having absorbed moisture from the meat. When the acidic scent of August's blueberries reach the nostrils, one can taste a hint of wine, evidence that fermentation has begun.

Though they are few, there are some sweating, suspicious looking containers which even I do not care to examine. No sense will be touched, no faculty assaulted by the essence of a particular yogurt. It will go unexplored, uninvestigated. For I am not a fool. Though one may be revolted to learn how seldom I clean out my refrigerator, even I have limits — I do not open two-month-old yogurt.

Saturday Morning

By

Michelle Jones

The little boy sees Superman
And Spiderman
And Wonderwoman
  Rescuing the helpless
Capturing the guilty
". . . Crime does not pay . . ."

  . . . and he wishes.
He wishes he had muscles like iron
And a bright red cape
Faster than a speeding bullet,
  more powerful than a locomotive
  and able to leap tall buildings in a single

B
O
U
N
D

Instead of watching Co-Co Wheats commercials
And tying a blanket around his shoulders
  instead of a bright-red cape.

———————

As One . . .

By

Jeanne Marie Bowman

Soft promises, spoken in
The night.

Silken skin under roughened hands and
Hearts beat, a crescendo of delight.

Bliss-enveloped sleep . . . til
The dawn

Lays pearl-strings of light
Across the bed they dream on.

Faint yellow threads of
The sun,

Highlight the passion-tangled hair,
Finds them embraced, as one . . .

Untitled

By

Diane O'Neill

Rain,
  tapping rhythms
  on roof and windows.

Enticing me,
  I step outside.

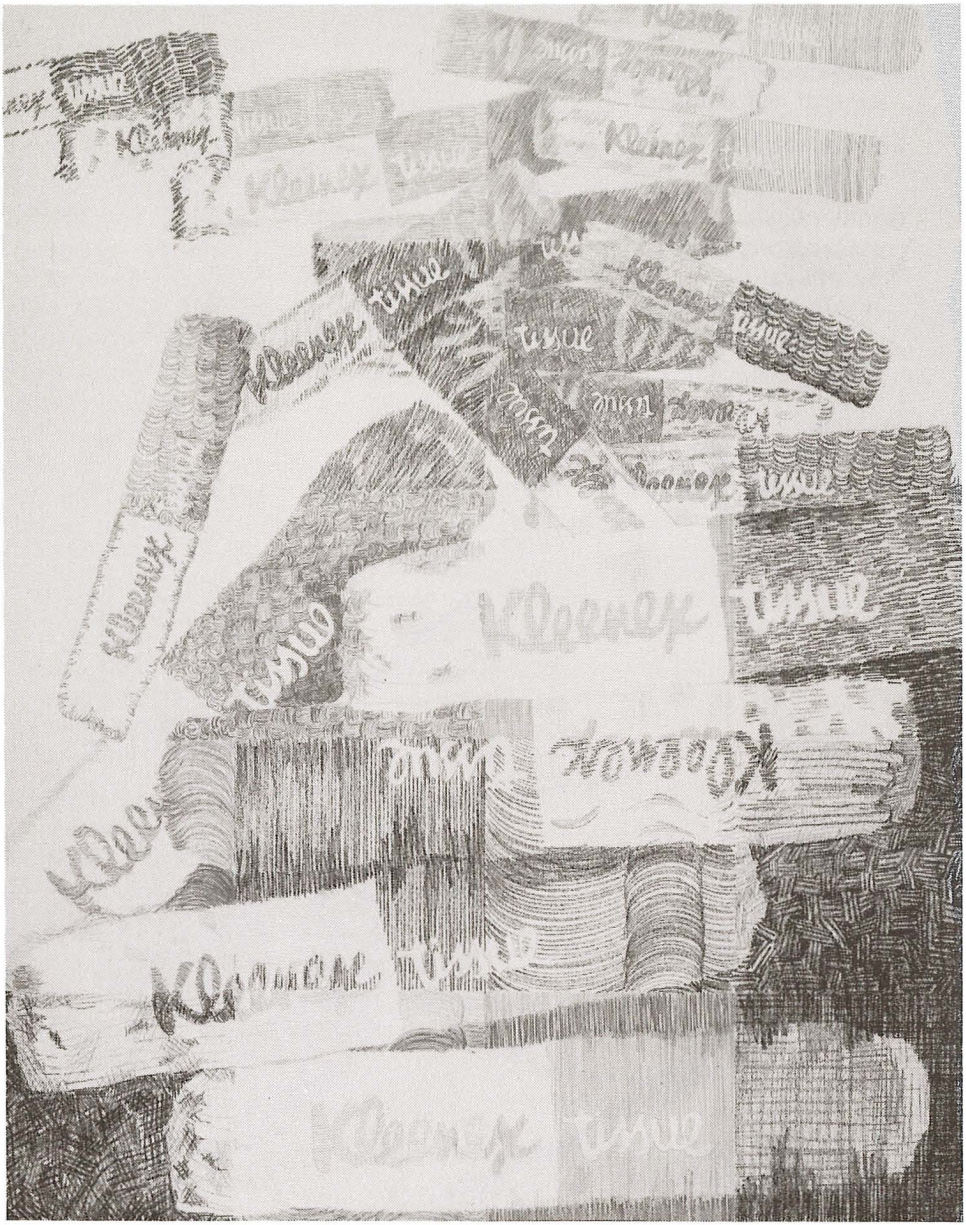
Gentle fingers
  massage my face,
Tiny shocks
  trickle down my neck.

Angel's tears,
  or simple rain?

No matter now,
  the world and I
  are washed clean.

Statue of Liberty

Joyce Knight



Kleenex

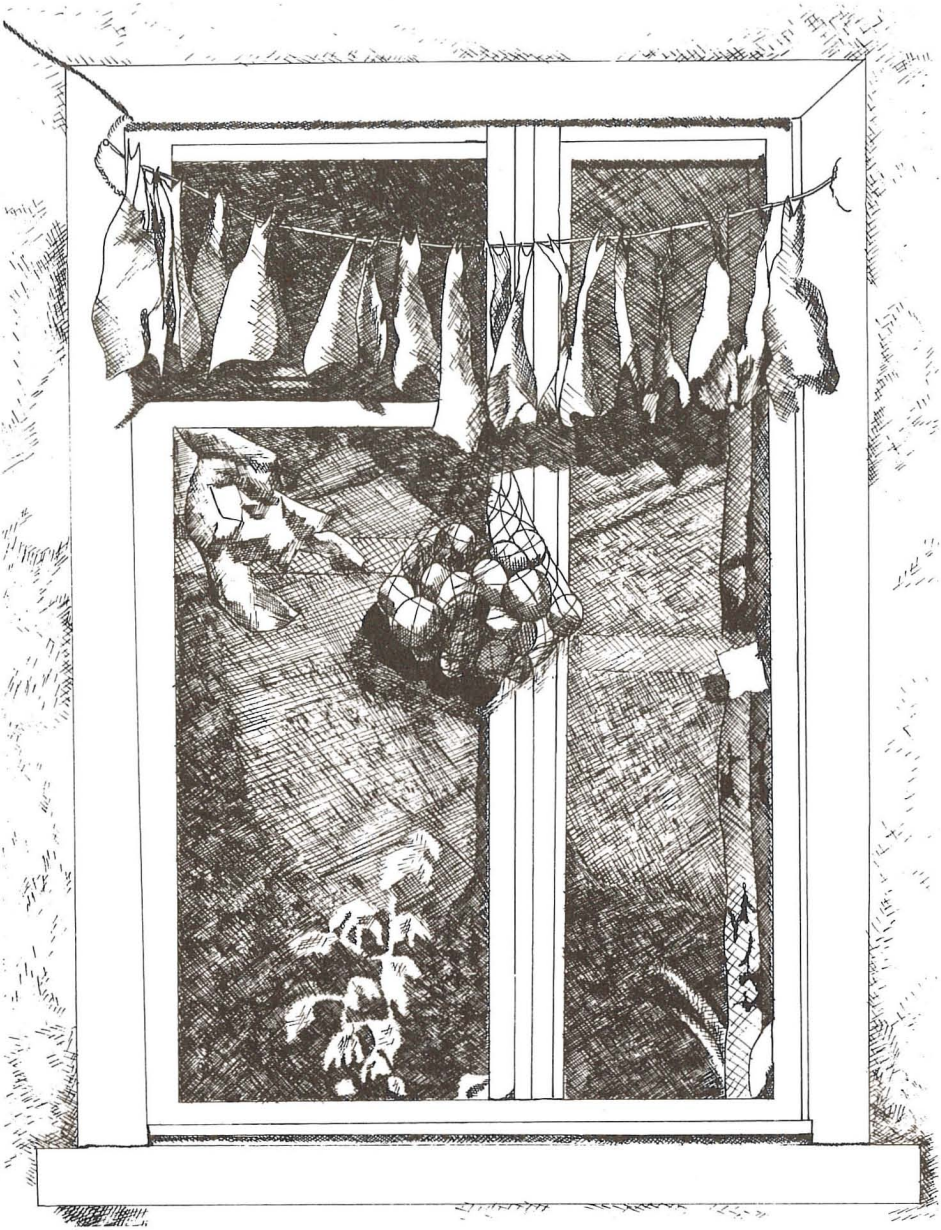
Gayle Hollenbeck

Untitled

By

Marilyn Newton

The clouds
dark and heavy
like a solid mass of sorrow
and grief
hang unmoving in the sky
The wind
humid
in slow motion
sway the trees
to and fro
and they too
catch the mood
The radiant sun
its infinite flame unceasing
is covered
in thick folds
of remorse
The trees
dipped in grey sorrow
hang their arms
in heavy woe
and it begins —
the perfect tears
fall to earth
the heavens,
crying for the fate of mankind



Still Life Holly Markel

Alfie

By

Diane O'Neill

It was 2:00 a.m. and a full-moon bathed Laura in its silver light as she walked to the end of the diving board. Hesitating only briefly, she left the board, neatly slicing the water without a ripple. Surfacing, she turned over and did a lazy back-stroke down the pool's length letting the tensions of a busy day drain away. At last relaxed, and giving in to the lateness of the hour, she made her way across the shallow end of the pool. As she reached for the ladder, her towel appeared. "Thanks," she muttered, as she draped it around her neck. Suddenly, it occurred to her that towels don't just appear out of thin air. Curious as to what was happening on her patio, she eased herself onto the ladder, and timidly peeked over the pool's edge.

Standing before her, framed by bright moonlight, stood a most amazing looking little man. He was barely two feet tall, and sported a long, flowing beard which was the color of burnished copper. Bushy eyebrows of the same hue protruded from beneath a floppy, pointed cap of bright yellow, and he wore a dark blue shirt and shocking red britches which were tucked into tall, black patent leather boots. As she stared at him in astonishment, he lit a pipe and hopped into her favorite chair, grinning like the proverbial Cheshire cat.

"Good evening, my dear, it certainly is a fine night for a swim now, isn't it?" His eyes twinkled brightly, and his voice was as light as a breeze and carried the faintest hint of a brogue.

Laura regained her composure just enough to become indignant at his intrusion. "And WHO are you?" she demanded angrily.

"I don't care, who would you like me to be? Guardian Angels and Fairy Godfathers are quite popular, take your pick. Actually, I'm just a friend concerned with your welfare, Dearie." He smiled, and a perfect grey smoke ring rose lazily above his head.

"I do NOT need anyone to be concerned with my welfare, as I do quite all right for myself, thank you!" She couldn't believe it. She was having a conversation with an elf, or whatever he was, as if the whole encounter were quite sane.

His eyes twinkled. "It's not your physical or material welfare, Dearie; I'm concerned about your mental state. Your intelligence quotient is slipping rapidly, and you are in a rut to say the least!"

Still standing on the ladder, she let herself fall gently back into the water. Floating on her back, she hoped that when she looked again, he would have disappeared. It must be the full moon, she thought, I've read that it makes some people go mad! She turned her head so that one ear cleared the water. He was still talking.

"My advice is to never find fault with your neighbor until you have walked for three moons in his moccasins."

That did it. She hauled herself up on the side of the pool and took the towel he held out to her. "Now look here Mr. . . . what IS your name anyway?!"

"I don't care. What would you like it . . . to . . .," he trailed off at the sight of her face, which by then was red enough to been seen even in the near dark.

"O.K., you can call me Alfie; everyone does."

"Right. So, Alfie, I refuse to believe you are sitting in my chair, puffing smoke rings and spouting Indian proverbs. It's insane, and I am sane . . . I think." She lit a cigarette and tried to blow a defiant smoke ring of her own. Instead, a decidedly non-ring shaped puff of smoke drifted into her own eyes. Alfie smiled sympathetically and handed her a clean white handkerchief with which to wipe the tears that were streaming down her cheeks.

"Of course, you are sane. Everyone swims at 2:00 a.m. and talks to little men, and fills up their eyes with their own smoke. Sane yes, but perhaps a bit eccentric, which is all right since you are an Aquarian. Most of them are eccentric you know; it's in their stars. As for the proverbs, I could explain if given the chance."

Indignation and disbelief suddenly gave way to curiosity. He knew her Zodiac sign! What else could he know? "O.K., why are you here, Alfie?"

He flashed a satisfied grin and pulled his chair closer to the one she now occupied. "That's better, my Dear! Now, I've been hanging around for awhile, just keeping an eye on you. Most of the time I let things slide, but today, oh my goodness, today was quite unbelievable!"

Laura quickly turned the day's events over in her mind. There was nothing there that she could see. Her days were QUITE believable, she thought.

Alfie cocked a questioning eyebrow. "No? Well, I'll tell you. Your three best friends were here today for one of your coffee klatches. Yes, and there you all sat around the table. Why, if awards were to be given for the cattiest remarks and the most vicious gossip, you four could take the prize with no questions!"

Ouch! She remembered. Today's session HAD been exceptionally hot and heavy. "Never judge your neighbor until you've walked for three moons in his moccasins, right?" Alfie smiled and looked quite pleased. "At least you're not a lost cause. Do you know what that proverb means?"

Of course she knew. But what did that have to do with it? "What does that have to do with it? And why pick on me, anyway?" He shook his head sadly. "You're such an intelligent woman, or were. It's such an awful waste that you choose to spend your time in such a manner. And are you really so unfeeling? I think not, but you need a little boot in the britches now and then to remind you!"

Laura was totally ashamed of herself. This little man was sitting here, probably a figment of her own vivid imagination, making her hate herself. It was absurd, but she was no longer in the mood to argue. She settled back into her chair and dutifully listened as Alfie went into a long analogy of moccasins and lifestyles, explaining to her that even if two people wore exactly the same size shoe, and chose identical styles, eventually the shoe would take the shape of the wearer's foot, therefore not fitting the other person properly regardless of the identical size. He heavily stressed individuality. He went on for what

seemed to her like hours, and at last seemed to be winding up his sermon. "So you see how ridiculous it is to say — 'if I were she.' — Even if you were able to step into her role, it would fit you differently because of the individuality you'd carry with you!" Laura was still a bit confused and knew that for her own comfort she should not ask her next question, but she did anyway. "O.K., Alfie, I see your point, but what does it all have to do with me?" He bristled and puffed his pipe angrily. "How dare you gossip about another woman when you don't have the vaguest idea why she behaves as she does? It's impossible for you to know! I would think that you would become a much wiser person if you would talk TO the woman and not ABOUT her!"

The final punch was delivered, and Laura felt so terrible that tears sprang to her eyes. Alfie patted her hand and softened somewhat. "There, there, Dear, you're not hopeless. That's why I'm here. You see, you and your friends are simply in a rut. You don't know how to communicate without tearing down someone else."

Alfie was right and Laura knew it. She did feel badly at times about gossiping, and often wished to discuss something other than the day's latest grapevine tip. But she was invariably outvoted. "How do I climb out of the rut, Alfie?" She honestly wanted to know.

Up rose another perfect smoke ring as Alfie leaped from his chair excitedly. "Simple!" he bellowed, scaring her nearly to death. "Refuse to do it! Gossip I mean. When someone says — 'You'll never guess what that Alice has done now' — simply say — 'I don't think it's any of my business; what do you think of the new fall fashions?' — You won't believe how much fun you'll have!" He straightened his little blue shirt with a tug. "Well, I must be going, Dearie. Go in now before you catch a chill. I'll be in touch to see how the experiment is coming." Before she could protest, he had vanished. She sat smoking and staring at the moon, wondering if she would remember this crazy dream in the morning. At last she went in and climbed into bed next to her nice, warm, sleeping husband. But six restless hours later, Alfie was still with her.

As she sat with her second cup of morning coffee, she had to admit to herself that the events of the previous night had actually taken place. She took her cup and wandered onto the patio. There lay her towel, and a tiny pile of what looked to be tobacco lay on the cement near the chair in which her visitor had sat. You're not crazy at least, she thought, as she brushed the tobacco away with her bare foot. She settled into a chair to let the sun warm her back and to think about all that the little man had said. It was all true. Not having to work outside of the home, she was nicely settled into the routine of housewife-mother. Her days were filled with the housework and those coffee klatches with her friends, where the conversation invariably centered around whoever was absent that day. How long it had been since she had read a good book, played her piano, or gone for a walk just for the joy of it! Alfie was right. She was in an incredibly boring rut. She decided to try the "experiment."

As if in answer to her thoughts, Sue, Laura's very dearest friend, appeared on the patio with a cup of coffee which she had liberated from Laura's kitchen. She settled into a deck chair, tucking her long legs beneath her.

Well Alfie, thought Laura, here's the first test. This woman is the greatest gossip artist I know. She's my dearest friend and I love her, but she has a tongue like a razor! Laura thought she heard soft laughter.

Balancing her cup on one knee, Sue brushed her forehead with the back of her hand. "It sure is warm. I'll bet it's a scorcher by this afternoon."

"So, what are you up to this morning?" Laura asked.

"Oh, I've got more jobs to do than the biggest factory today, but I thought I'd stop by for a quick one."

And tell me about who? Laura wondered.

Sue spoke. "Edith called just before I left the house. You'll never BELIEVE what that Martha Hampstead has done now!"

Laura was dying to ask, but just at that moment a perfect grey smoke ring rose into the air just behind Sue's head. O.K., Alfie, have it your way, chuckled Laura to herself. She took a deep breath. "Well, Sue, actually, if it's any of my business, I'm sure Martha will tell me about it herself. Have you done the kid's shopping for school yet?"

Sue, her mouth open, ready to spill the details, looked as if she had just been whacked between the eyes with a baseball bat. Disbelief and confusion clouded her eyes. She set her cup on the cement and unsteadily rose to her feet. "No, I haven't. In fact, I was on my way to town when I stopped here. I really must run, 'Bye!" And run she did.

Laura didn't hear from her for two weeks. In the meantime, the same thing happened with the rest of the "girls". It was as if Laura had personally cut out their tongues, and they avoided her like the plague. She was a little lonely, but she read four books, dusted off the piano, and went for a lovely long hike. (She also went to see Martha.)

It was a very peaceful two weeks, and the loneliness gradually began to wear off. Laura began to feel much better about herself. I may have lost my friends, she thought, but possibly when I meet new ones, I'll use a different set of guidelines in choosing them. It won't matter what size the moccasins, even if we wear the same size, we all walk different trails. She shook herself as she realized she was sounding more like Alfie all the time. As she wondered what had become of her little friend, she was startled to hear the phone ringing.

"Hello?"

"Laura? It's me." Her friend sounded tired.

"Hi Sue. How have you been?"

"Busy! But the kids are ready to start school next week, at last! Right now, I wondered if you could come over for coffee, I'd like to talk to you about something. It may be related to our last . . . uh . . . encounter."

"Oh? Anything special?" Laura held her breath.

"Well, . . . yes. It's really the strangest thing. I had this dream last night . . . at least I THINK it was a dream."

"Was it about a little man with a beard who blows smoke rings and spouts Indian proverbs?"

Sue gasped. "How did you know?"

Laura giggled. Good old Alfie had been making the rounds. "I'll be right there, Sue. It's a long story, so put on a whole pot of coffee." As she hung up the phone and turned to pick up her keys from the kitchen counter, there sat Alfie, puffing his smoke rings and looking quite pleased with himself.

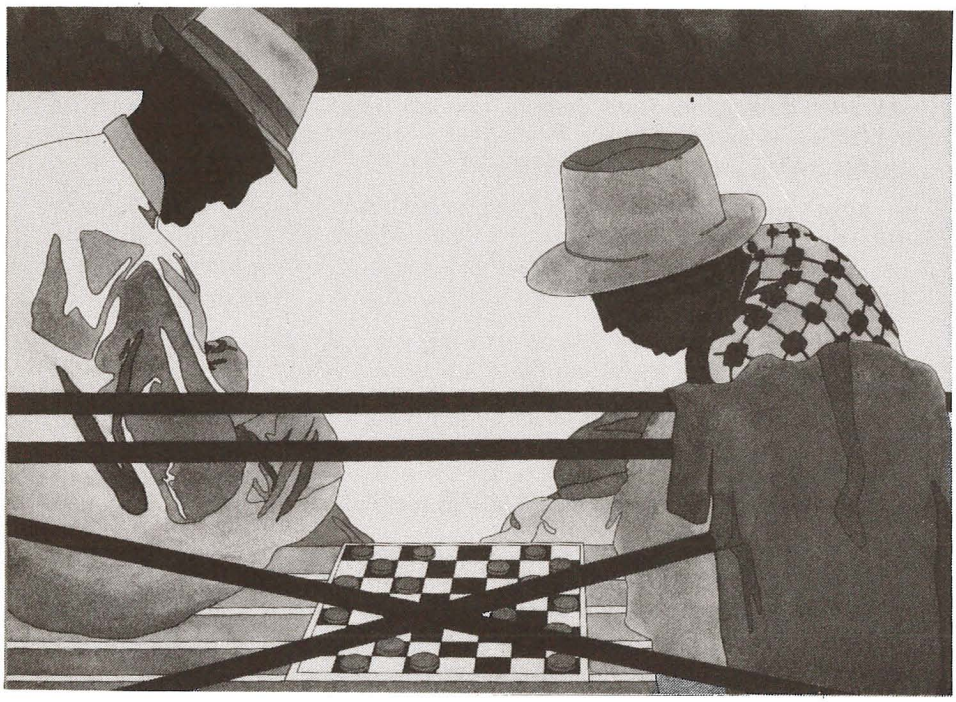
"You're a busy little fellow, Alfie," she teased.

"Yes, yes, I am. But there's so much to do you know. You've done well, my Dear, and your friend Sue will come along, too. But I'm afraid the other two are hopeless. Ah well, a 50% average is very good in my line of work. I think you and Sue have a lot to talk about, now that you've discovered there is more to talk about than other people. I'm pleased." He patted her arm, and she knew he was about to leave and not return.

"Where are you off to now, Alfie?"

A gleam came into his eyes. "Well, now that I have silenced you two, there are three women over in Midtown who could burn your ears off. I'm going to see what can be done there." He looked positively excited, and Laura knew that soon at least one woman in Midtown would be doubting her own sanity.

"Goodbye, Alfie. May your moccasins make happy tracks in many snows, and may the rainbow always touch your shoulder." He stood and kissed the tip of her nose. "You're learning, Dearie." And he twinkled out of sight, leaving one last smoke ring hanging on the air. She poked her finger through it, and decided not to try and figure who he really was. Instead, she picked up her keys and started for Sue's.



Checkers

Grant Prihs

In A Desert Place

By

Gary Butler

As I stopped the car, a slide show of memories returned — recognition of the distant mountains and the ever-present cactus. For a long time, I had imagined a return to this spot — this scene in my life. I opened the door and ambled over to look at the sign.

On the back, printed in ten-year old ink, it still said:

> This damn place may be my home. I've been here long enough to plant a garden, if anything but cactus would grow. Crossroads and exits in the middle of nowhere are a bitch. No rides. No cars or trucks. Not even a lousy motorcycle. It's too fucking HOT! I want to get the hell out of here!
>
> S.C.

A flood of memories returned. It was almost impossible to realize that the same damn sign was still there. A mileage marker — most every highway entrance has one. I began to think back.

The days before I marked that sign had been rather uneventful. It seemed to me that "hitchhiking" was the easiest method of travel yet devised by modern man. It was cheap. Rides were plentiful. And waiting gave me time to enjoy the countryside.

Yesterday had brought me out of the Saulte River Canyon in Arizona and now I was getting into desert country. I was already beginning to miss the huge red cliffs that were speckled with the color of evergreen. Now I could see only cactus rolling away on the dry terrain.

After I spent the night in Flagstaff, the first ride that day was with a smartly dressed businessman. The man drove a luxurious Lincoln and talked on and on about prospects in the Future Market. He was headed for a meeting in Palm Springs. I was going to San Diego. We parted at Williamston, Arizona.

I had a quiet lunch in a little red-checker-table restaurant. Almost as soon as I put my thumb back in use, I was on my way again.

An old guy in a fairly run-down pickup stopped and yelled:

"Put yer gear in the back."

"Okay," I said as I threw my pack into the bed.

Everytime I got a new ride, I was thrilled with the experience. The conversational possibilities were immense. I was never sure how topics would arise. Most of the conversations began with, "Who are you?", "Where ya goin?" or "Where ya from?" But, from there the words would go in as many directions as a meandering stream, flowing from one discussion to another.

"Plant yourself for a good long ride," the old fellow said. "I'm going to California. How far are you headed?"

"I'm headed for San Diego and the beach."

"Gonna chase bikinis, huh?"

"Well, maybe," I laughed.

We talked for hours and hours. Our topics covered things like history, war, peace, rabbits, books, the weather, government, and everything I didn't mention. I soon began to like the old guy.

His name was Jack. He had been born and raised on a ranch in Southern California. The nearest town to his ranch was a little place called Dry Gulch. To me it sounded like a wild west ghost town — probably complete with tumbleweeds. Jack had very little formal education, but he had much practical knowledge. He had been an avid reader of the last ". . . twenty years or so," as he put it. And he knew practically everything anyone would want to know. Jack had been, at one time or another, everything from a barnstorming-acrobat, a chef, an accountant, to a bronco rodeo rider and a mechanic.

Jack was not a very big man, but his mannerisms gave him an air of authority, as if one should never question anything he said. When he spoke of something of importance, he would look right into my eyes. He was sincere. His perfectly trimmed hair and beard gave him the distinguished appearance of the aristocracy. If it had not been for his flannel shirt and jeans, he could be mistaken for the king of some small English speaking country.

We stopped for the night in a little motel just outside of Lake Havasu, still in Arizona. Jack paid for the room and dinner and a twelve pack.

Through the sliding-glass doors at the end of the room, Jack and I watched the lightning of a thunderstorm dance in the mountains. The heavens were performing a light show. The streaks of static electricity flashed and crossed, forming a spectre of lacy patterns against the rugged background. It was a beautiful signal that the thirst of the mountains was being quenched.

Jack told me that if it rained most of the night in the mountains, the roads in the desert would flood in places. Flash floods, he called them. Water collects in the mountains and foothills, and then rushes down to the desert floor, carrying sand, gravel, and man-made derbis. Any low spots in the road become short-lived lakes and rivers. He was glad not to have driven through the night.

Topics seemed inexhaustible to Jack. We talked for hours and hours just sitting there — just drinking slowly and talking — in no hurry. It was a conversation with no pattern, no definition, not necessarily for information or argumentation. It was only a conversation to pass time. The mountains stayed awake with us. Maybe, they listened too.

After breakfast Jack and I headed out again. He told me that we would reach Dry Gulch by the end of the day. Again, we settled into conversation.

As we drove, Jack pointed out the water marks along the road from the previous night's flood. Every so often, we would top a crest in the road and see where the water had washed dirt, cactus, cans, and other debris into the road.

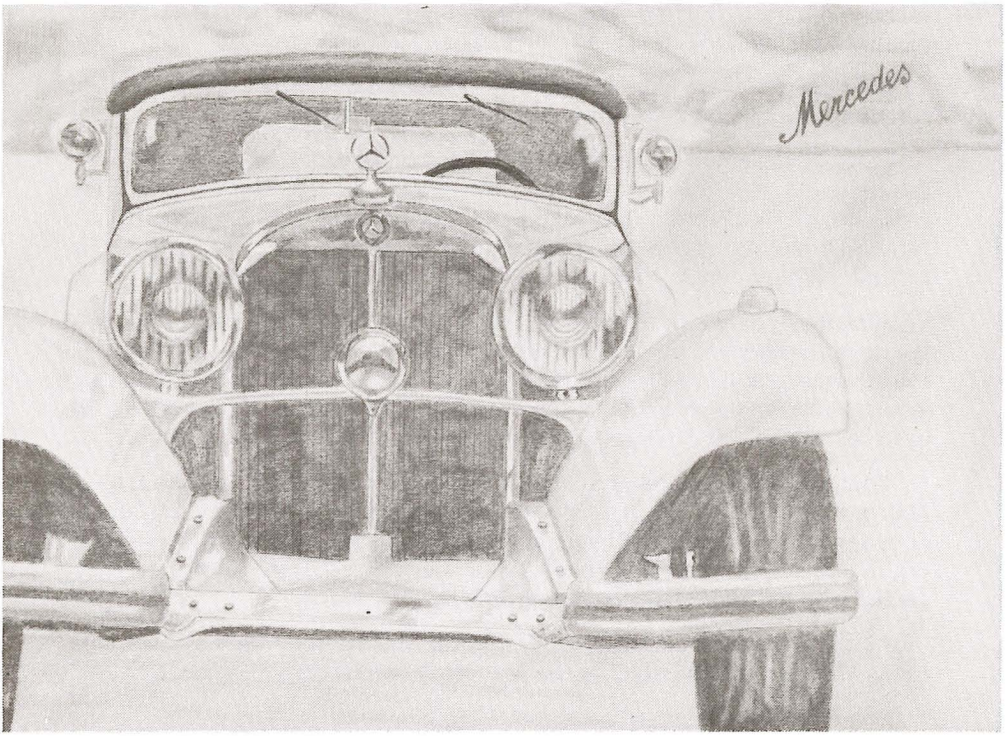
We would slow down and dodge the piles of junk. We noticed an abandoned car on the shoulder of the road. It was sitting in what had probably been a small rushing river last night, with a drowned engine. More than likely the owner had set off in search of a tow-truck.

I noticed few cars as we sped across the desert highway. The distant mountains stood motionless as they receded behind us. The land was becoming flat with jutting, jagged rocks breaking up the straight lines. Otherwise one could probably see forever. It was awesome, and beautiful. We were alone speeding through the desert.

Jack's exit for Dry Gulch, California, came at just about dusk. We had stopped about an hour before for dinner and Jack invited me to stay at his house. I thanked him for the offer, but declined saying that my friends in San Diego were expecting me. He said that the offer was good as long as he was alive. If I was ever in Dry Gulch, I was to look him up. "Everybody knows me," he'd said in a matter-of-fact tone.

As I scooted out of the pick-up, I said, "Thanks for everything, Jack. You're really great!"

"Well, Steve, I wish you luck — and don't forget some of those things we talked about."



Mercedes

Paul Stank

"I won't. I'll see you again someday. Take care, Jack."

I plopped my pack down as he sped-off. I was a little empty as I watched his dust-trail disappear to the south. The dust gained a reddish tint as the sun began to drop into the low mountains of the west. For the first time since my trip began, it seemed that I would spend the entire night alone. I could not hear any engine noises at all. I settled down by the signpost of the highway, leaned on my pack, and watched the sunset.

I had never witnessed a more beautiful exchange between the sun and the moon. The sun descended in a fiery ball, creating playful colors on the jagged rocks and on the sparse arrangement of clouds in the sky. Even before the sun could fully relinquish its power, the moon began assuming authority in the east. The colors became very intense, then very pastel. As the sun was slowly defeated by the moon, a billion stars came to watch. I had never seen so many stars. The sky became clear. The moon shadows were strong. The multitude of stars, like huge diamonds set on black velvet, captivated me.

For a long time I just lay against my back-pack and looked. I wasn't even thinking — not consciously anyway. I just looked deep into space and the space looked back inside of me. Finally, I unrolled my sleeping bag and crawled in for some sleep.

The morning came very early — too early it seemed. Dawn approached with renewed strength. Day overcame night. It was another ecstatically emotional exchange of control by the heavens. The stars, the millions of stars, fought alongside the moon to try to hold back the powerful desert sun, but inevitably the sun won.

Watching the sunrise had filled me with great expectations for the day. I was only a day's ride from the coast. With luck, I could get a single ride and make it. After all, Jack had brought me a long way. After a granola-bar breakfast, I made a sign from the cardboard that I always carried with me. The sign simply said, "COAST"

I remained optimistic about the day until about noon. The sun was getting more and more commanding. I began to remove clothing until I was dressed only in a pair of cut-off jeans, hiking boots, and a felt hat. I was still sweating. And none of the far too few cars that passed had stopped — nor even slowed down.

My spirits sank even lower when I read the sign that I had not taken the time to read the day before. It said:

DRY GULCH	50 miles
NEEDLES	156 miles
SAN DIEGO	269 miles

I then took out my map and noticed that I was in the middle of nowhere. I had a destination and no way of getting there. There was no gas station and no houses within sight. There were jagged rocks and cactus. I was totally and completely alone.

Since I had nothing better to do, I just sat there looking at an empty road stretch into the distance. Even my sign began to melt because of the heat. I found a few sticks of wood, all dried up. "Must have been washed down from

the mountains," I thought, remembering the sights of yesterday. With my rain poncho and the sticks, I made a lean-to for shade. This was a bad idea for hitch-hiking. If a ride came, it would take time to dismantle this shelter. But, it seemed that I was resigned to the fact that I wan't going to get a ride — at least not today anyway.

I did have two canteens that, fortunately, Jack had compelled me to fill yesterday. I also had a small mess kit and several dehydrated dinners left. So, I would not starve if I did not get a ride today. I smiled.

As the day wore on and on, I longed for a glass of lemonade, or a cold beer. Also, it would have been good to talk to someone. I was getting very bored with myself. I began recalling some of the events of my trip so far.

In Colorado, I had met a mountain climber and with him scaled a sharp cliff. In Texas, I had several drinks with several cowgirls and went for a midnight ride. I had met hundreds of people. I experienced a lot of new things. But, no matter what I thought about, I always came back to Jack. He was, by far, the most interesting person in my trip. Suddenly, I recalled our last conversation.

"So, you're in a hurry to get to the coast, are ya?"

"Sort of," I said. "I've never seen the Pacific. I want to get there soon. Real soon."

"That's a problem with some people these days. They never want to wait. They want to do it now. Right now. Ya know? Some folks get so anxious for something to happen, that when something does happen, they don't notice it. Those folks are already getting anxious about the next thing. They are rushing from one place to another, and from one thing to another. These folks don't take the time or have the patience to appreciate the things around them."

"I don't think I'm like that, but I do want to get there soon."

"Steve, have you ever been in the desert before?"

"Well, no."

"There's also a whole world here that you haven't seen. There are lots of things here to appreciate. If you rush through it, you may never notice the beauty. You should stay put. Come to my ranch. You won't regret it."

"But Jack, my friends are expecting me."

"Call 'em from my place."

"Well . . . I really want to get there."

"Okay. But you'll have to draw the line someday between this rush, rush opinion, or you'll pass yourself up eventually. Then you end up alone! Then you don't even have **you** anymore."

"I'll think about it, Jack."

I remembered saying that with the notion of forgetting what he said. I was amazed to find myself pondering this problem. For being a slightly crazy old guy, Jack did make a lot of sense.

The sun slid behind the mountains and the moon took over in a splendid

display. The stars marched in like guards in formation. The darkness was only slightly dimmer than the day had been.

I saw no reason to take down the lean-to; so, I slept under it. But, the glorious dawn did not inspire me as much as the previous dawn had. Somehow I was not expecting a ride. I was not disappointed.

I braced the sign that said "COAST" against my pack and I began to survey my surroundings. I found some late-blooming cactus flowers and chased some chameleons into their underbrush. The massive rocks that jutted out of the ground were reddish. I climbed atop a small, flat bluff that was just behind my spot. I could clearly see all of my belongings, but if a car stopped, I could not have come down very quickly.

As I sat on the bluff, digesting the view, my thoughts again returned to Jack.

". . . you'll pass yourself up eventually. Then you end up alone. Then you don't even have **you** anymore."

What did Jack know about this anyway? He had done a thousand things in his life. He wasn't alone. After all, doesn't everybody in Dry Gulch know him? If Jack had done as many things as he said he did, then he must've kept on the move. In fact, Jack was still on the move. I had never noticed until just then that Jack had never mentioned any friends, acquaintances, or even a wife and family.

I had just taken for granted that anyone as old as Jack was probably married. However, in all of Jack's recitation of personal history, he had not once mentioned a wife. Nor had Jack mentioned any close friends. Jack had either talked about his experiences or had discussed issues that grew out of his experiences. He had dropped names now and then, but they never seemed important to Jack. They were just names.

I spent the rest of the day trying to figure Jack out. He seemed to be perfectly happy. That is, until the last conversation. His eyes always sparkled when he looked at me. They always sparkled until he said, " . . . you'll pass yourself up eventually. Then you end up alone. Then you don't have **you** anymore." Then, the sparkle was instantly cut off, as a candle blown out by the wind. It was as if something long unused in Jack were being flint-struck to life again and as if the storm inside was so turbulent that the flame died as it was relit. The glow did not return in our last few moments together. Jack pretended to be light-hearted, but the sparkle was still missing as we parted. I was sad to see him go and did not even recognize this difference until now — now that I was totally alone in the desert.

By the time I got off the bluff, it was late afternoon. I had spent another day fifty miles from nowhere. Whether I had wanted to or not, I was doing just what Jack had said. I had slowed down. I grabbed my felt-marker and began to write on the back of that sign:

"This damn place may be my home. I've been here long enough to . . ." I was still in a hurry.

The night came again. The moon was not as full, but the stars were just as bright. I moved my sleeping bag to the top of the bluff and watched the stars stretch from horizon to horizon. This time, however, I did not look at the stars

as a whole. I took my time and watched each one separately. My mind moved across the sky, and time, and space, as slowly as across the moon. The moon looked in at me and at Jack.

I realized that it was no mistake that he and I had had that conversation. Jack may have found something that was in me that was in him. He may have just wanted me to be aware of his loneliness. He probably did not want me to chase the same things that he had chased by becoming too busy, or too rushed. I think, moreover, that Jack did not want another person to make, what he considered to be a mistake in his life by not taking the time to appreciate the world while he was still young. That was it. Jack was a philosopher.

I was still awake when the sun announced the arrival of a new day by pushing fingers of light into the still night sky. This time, I watched the sunrise with distinction. There was distinction from every other time because I watched, not to see a day begin, but just to watch a beautiful sunrise.

My ride came soon that day. When I had finished breakfast, I decided to dismantle the lean-to and pack up. It's as if someone had arranged the whole thing, or, at least, the last few days. The first car that came along stopped.

I rode the rest of the way to San Diego with a banker, rushing off to a meeting. Somehow, I was hoping he would drive slower. I had finally left that spot.

As I left the sign that I had marked long ago and walked back to my car with misty eyes, I was hoping that I could find a Dry Gulch that was still a real town and not a "ghost town."

DRY GULCH 50 miles

I was anxious to see if anyone knew an old man named Jack with a ranch. I hoped he was still alive, so he could see my family. So that I could thank him. I turned my car down that same dusty road that Jack had taken long ago and drove on under the darkening sky.

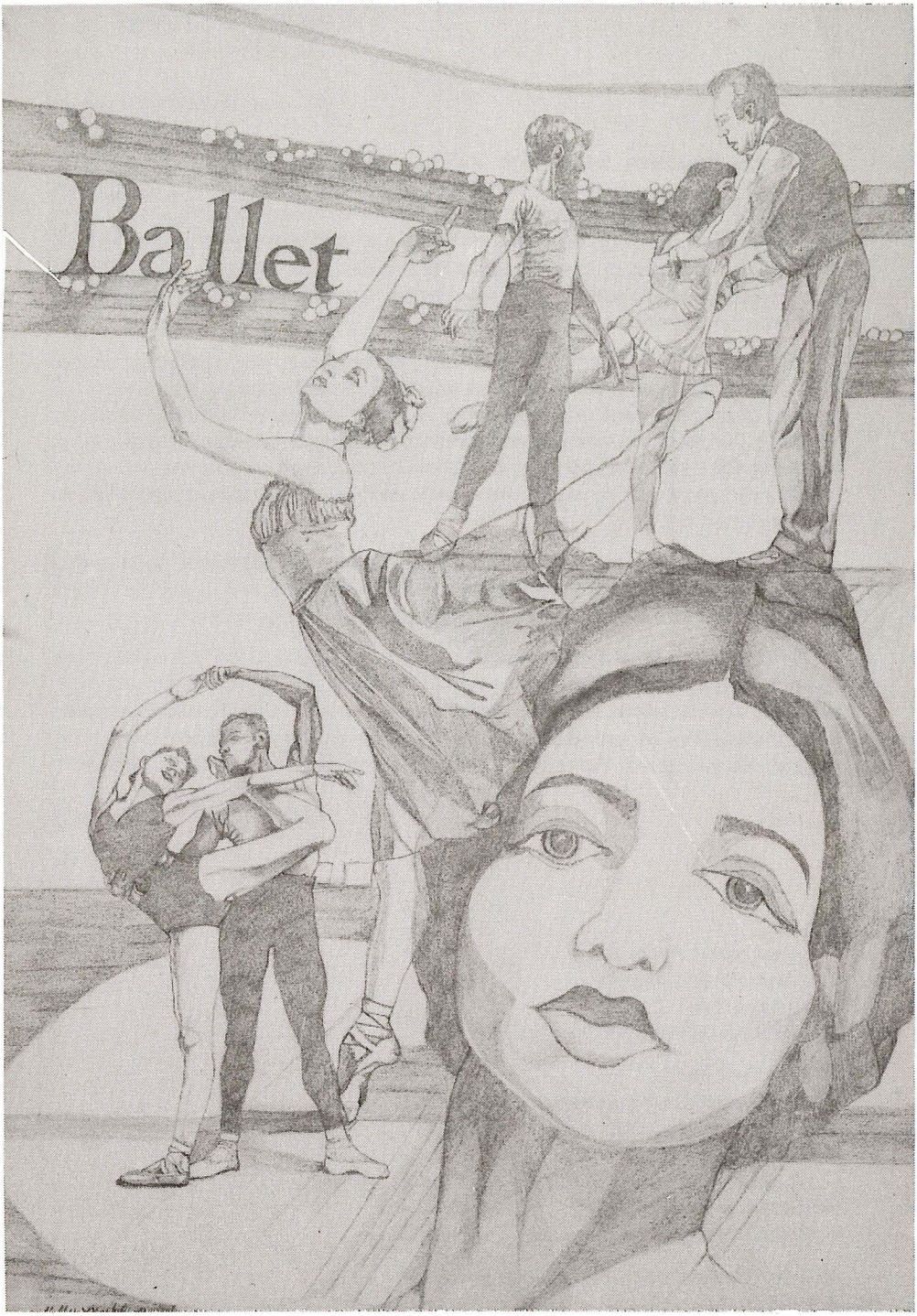
———————

Untitled

By

Mike Hart

Every great work of art
is hung with common wire.



Ballet Holly Markel

Waiting Forever . . .

By

Jeanne Marie Bowman

Dusty, forgotten fields with lonely, stretching highways. Those old, crumbling roads restlessly eat thin strips of miles through the faded landscape. Yet, someone lives out there — in windswept isolation. It is a very old house, and seems to be reclaimed by the land. The worn, gray planks hide behind the shifting and whispering of the tall, dry grasses. A weathered rocking chair offers solitary companionship. It creaks an incessant vigil from its place on the decayed porch.

Wearily, Sunday afternoons still come around and hang above the house, like a limp, tattered shawl. Only on this day, does the chair groan with the weight of an occupant. The someone, . . . who sets up a rhythmic, hypnotic rocking. Just rocking, and patiently waiting. Waiting for the barren to blossom. Looking for a visitor to come at last. Even hoping for a vehicle to pass on the distant dirt road; just to watch the artistic dust puffs that they would make as they zoomed by.

But the sun is defeated once again by the gathering nightdust, and it drops down slowly, with great fatigue. Soon, the rounds of sharp, piercing cricket songs begin. The darkening sky is soaked in glitter-starlight.

The desolate time has come again, and the someone slowly shuffles back into the empty house. The shabby rocker is vacant — left to creak its harmony, with the hollow wind. The lone occupant still waits. Waits for sleep to settle over the restless, moaning boards. Waits for a hush to descend on the whispering, shifting grasses. Waits for anything. Waits for nothing. Waits forever.

———————

Crystal Prisoners

By

Michelle Jones

We can never really talk
Oh, there's the weather
  and the car
  and who will win the game tonight

But I bleed inside
  I want to pound on the pane of glass
    surrounding you
And force you to see —
  Hold up my bloody hands
A triumphant scream,
  "Look! I've broken through!"

But fear freezes me, immobile and crystal
  Fear that
You'll turn away, puzzled
  and ask what the White Sox's chances are
Inwardly shaking your head.

According To Plan

By

Michelle Jones

Integrity
  Punctuality
    Adaptability
Make for a competent teacher
Or so they say.

Life is organized, precise
  according to a course outline:

I. Life
  A. Birth
  (all the way of course to)
  Z. Death

It makes them feel so much better —
  how can the unthinkable
    the unstructured
    the unplanned
    the unorganized
happen
When it's all down in black and white?
No deviation allowed
Or your grade will be lowered by one-third.

Alien

By

Nancy Osborn

He trudged wearily up the steps to his house and clumsily tried to fit the key into the lock. The inky blackness of the late hour made it difficult to find the target, but at last the front door swung open. He quickly entered and automatically reached for the light switch. The brilliance of light was denied him though; hands reached out through the darkness and held him fast. More hands formed fists and delivered painful blows to his body. His mouth tried desperately to scream, but yet another pair of hands found his throat, their crushing strength slowly squeezed the breath from his body. An eternity passed and at last his limp form crumpled and fell to the floor.

He was never aware of the feet that scurried out the door among hushed but triumphant laughter. Neither did he hear the voices whispering, "Death to illegal aliens! Death to Iranians!"

The morning edition of the paper carried the story of a murder of a man on Crescent Street; the details were all dutifully reported, and the police searched for the assailants. But certain facts were omitted by the news people. No one ever read about the twenty years the Iranian had spent in the United States. There was no report on the years the Iranian had worked in American factories and faithfully saved his American dollars. And the public never knew that ten years before, the Iranian had become an American. But even worse, no one even cared.

All For What?

By

Kevin Billingsley

Jay stared up at the wall watching the clock as it methodically ticked off time. "How like life the clock is," he thought to himself as he eased back in his chair. "It goes on and on progressing slowly until suddenly the hour is late and one wonders where those precious moments went."

"I wonder, am I wasting precious moments now, as I sit here and think about such a thing as time. Or should time be set aside so that such things can be thought about. No, time is not being wasted here. It is being used to find out why it is that people waste so much time."

The clock continued to silently tick away the minutes. Jay quite contentedly continued to stare up at it.

"Is time merely a combination of space and reality? No, it must be something much more. Something much more important than I must have even realized at first. Why, the hours speed away and people go on living as if nothing were happening. Don't they realize what they are doing? Why, they are wasting the most precious gift of all."

The clock continued to silently tick off the hours. Jay continued quite contentedly to stare up at it.

"Why, the fools. All of them fools. They spend their whole lifetimes searching for such insignificant things. Time slips by them and before they know it, it's all gone. Why do they do this? Spend years going to work, bringing home money. All for what? All for nothing, I say! For they spend a whole lifetime gathering something that when they finally get it, it will be lost."

"How stupid those people certainly are! How stupidly blind they are. Why waste four years or even ten years to go to school? All those years that can't be claimed or brought back for use at a later date."

The clock continued to silently tick off the days. Jay continued quite contentedly to stare up at it.

"Those poor souls who waste precious time preparing for death. They waste precious time gathering all the things they want in life only to give it away in a will after their time expires. What's worse are those who spend time burying somebody already dead. Why, by preparing for death, and mourning the already dead, they waste time, bringing them only closer to their own deaths."

"All for what? All so they can come to the time when they have no time. Oh, what fools they all are. For time is a very precious thing, indeed. Unless it is spent very wisely it is surely wasted. Heaven knows a lifetime is too short to be wasting valuable time."

The clock continued to silently tick off the years. Jay continued quite contentedly to stare up at it.

"Oh, what little time is left. Why the world might end tomorrow. It might end this minute. And they would all suffer and finally realize how much time they had all wasted. How those precious minutes, days, years all escaped, going quite unnoticed. Oh, the fools, the poor fools!"

The clock had stopped. Jay lay motionless in his chair staring blankly up at it.

———————

Lettering

Gayle Hollenbeck

Untitled

By

Diane O'Neill

Bare February
  wretched thing.
All black bones,
  like a skeleton,
  rattling on the wind.
Undressed,
  your naked form
  is depressing to behold.

But now,
  (at last!)
The dressmaker comes,
  to drape you
  in a gown of white,
  with ropes of crystal pearls
  about your scrawny neck.

Soft February,
  lovely thing.
Black skeleton
  transformed.

———————

Untitled

By

Patricia Boyle

A quivering brown leaf clinging
desperately to the limb,
draws one last breath and then
slowly falls.
Earthward,
until it is carried off by
a wisp of wind
whirling it carelessly
around and around.
But then,
the leaf is abandoned
and left to slowly fall
earthward again.

Face 53 Siobhan Collins

To Sit Or Stand

By

Charles F. Lautner, Jr.

Growing up in a small town has its advantages and disadvantages at bath time. Bathing in a wash tub, because bathroom facilities were located beyond the bounds of our house, caused many agonizing moments in the process of growing up. It also began a feud with mother over the merits of taking a bath or taking a shower. The debate is important when one is deprived of a choice in the matter.

Mother's defense of baths were numerous. Her favorite was that while in the tub she could scrub and make sure one was squeaky clean. To her, tub baths warmed the body; tub baths covered private parts; tub baths were relaxing; tub baths allowed one to sit down; tub baths allowed her to check and drill the bather's ears out when dirty. Her forays upon the body with a soapy washcloth and a heavy hand made one wish for better methods.

Although our home didn't have a shower, the use of a little wit could gain access to one. This was done on many occasions, and the feel of hot water rushing over the body left one feeling clean. A shower relaxes the body; a shower massages the body; a shower carries the dirt away; a shower's water temperature stays constant; a shower uses less water than a bath, and the hair can be washed while in the shower. This information was relayed to mother, but she didn't believe the body could be cleaned without taking a hot bath.

Bathtimes were a test of patience and endurance. Water was carried from the well outside the house and heated on a wood stove. The bath tub was brought in (it was the laundry tub on wash days) and filled with hot water from the stove. Then mother gave the water the heat test, by immersing her elbow in the water to test its temperature. Mother's elbow could stand a lot of heat, but when a foot was stuck into the water, it was hastily extracted. The injured party yelled and could be seen dancing around on one foot and fanning the air with the other trying to cool it. This brought laughter from the brothers witnessing the ordeal, and vows of revenge could be heard from the bather cast in the direction of the spectators. Mother's command to enter the tub stopped the nonsense and the onslaught began. With washcloth in one hand, and soap in the other, she scrubbed the soiled bather. Every conceivable sound was emitted as the body felt the washcloth, under the heavy pressure of mother's hand. The skin felt like raw wood beneath an angry carpenter's sandpaper. When the dirt (and what felt like the top layer of skin) was washed away, the bather was allowed to rest awhile in the tub. The over-scrubbed boy sat in the tub watching floating bergs of soap suds, dingy gray and threatening to make an amphibious assault to regain their place on his flesh. The bather emerged from the tub feeling not much cleaner than before the bath. The young mind did not understand how one could get clean while sitting in dirty water.

While staying at a friend's house, the choice of a shower or bath was offered. Choosing a shower began a love affair with them that has lasted a lifetime. Standing in the shower's spray, a million tiny comets bombard the skin and bounce into space. To lather the body in deep suds and let the falling

water wash it away, like an avalanche of snow down a mountainside, is pure pleasure. The dirty soap and water can be seen going down the drain, creating a whirlpool as it exists to some unknown region. This cleaning leaves the skin feeling as fresh as morning dew. The water gently stings the face when directly in the spray. It then caresses the neck, arms, torso and legs on its journey to the drain. Standing in a shower is being in a beautiful warm fog. Hearing the swish and feeling the sensation of falling water seduces the body into complete relaxation. A beckoning shower is a gentle seducer.

The debate with mother over bathing or showering went on. Showering proved that one could get clean without being immersed in water to the neck. Upon moving to a house that had a shower, the problem resolved itself. After showering and a close inspection of the body by mother, especially the ears, she concluded that maybe showering wasn't the worst method of getting clean. To this day, she insists on her tub bath, but her son revels in the spray of a steaming shower.

Downtown Larry Dodge

Untitled

By

Diane O'Neill

They let him out
the very next day,
The PHD's
who'd never seen him before,
and never even bothered
to ask his wife
why she'd had him committed.

"He's a little disturbed,
but not homicidal,
He'd never hurt you or the girls."

She wanted to believe them,
these educated men,
So she tried to ignore the fear.

But the deep purple marks
on her delicate throat,
Made as he tried choking
the life from her,
And the remembrance of the butcher knife
flashing in his hand,
made her wonder now.

How could a title
give men the power,
To know him better
after just one day,
Than she did after thirteen years?

They let him out
into the world,
And took her in
to their sterile domain.

And the world got the worst of the deal . . . again.

Justice

St. Clair County
Community College
Library